

Integrative Analysis of Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Interactive Reading Theories in Arabic Maharah Qira'ah Learning for Non-Native Speakers

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Abstract.

Arabic maharah qira'ah learning for non-native speakers still faces obstacles in text comprehension due to limited vocabulary, the complexity of language structures, and the use of learning approaches that tend to be partial rather than integrative. This study aims to analyze integratively the application of bottom-up, top-down, and interactive reading theories in maharah qira'ah learning. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the library research method. Data were obtained from various literature sources such as books, scientific journal articles, and relevant previous studies, then analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results of the study show that the bottom-up approach plays a role in the gradual recognition of language elements, while the top-down approach helps comprehension through background knowledge activities, and the interactive model integrates both simultaneously. The integration of these three approaches becomes more effective when applied in systematic learning stages, namely pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. Thus, the integration of reading theories can be a strategic solution in developing maharah qira'ah learning that is more comprehensive, systematic, and effective for non-native speakers.

Keywords: Arabic for Non-Native Speakers, Maharah Qira'ah, Reading Comprehension, Integrative Approach and Reading Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Arabic, as one of the official languages of the United Nations, is widely used in various fields such as science, politics, economics, and others, which proves that Arabic is a means of human communication (Cecep et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for students in Arabic language learning to master several basic skills, one of which is reading skills or *maharah qira'ah*. This skill is essential because through reading, a person can understand various information, knowledge, and values contained in Arabic texts. In addition, reading is also the main means of accessing Islamic literature, scientific knowledge, and academic sources that are widely written in Arabic. Therefore, mastery of *maharah qira'ah* becomes one of the important competencies in Arabic language learning (Alimudin et al., 2023).

However, in practice, many learners of Arabic as a foreign language still face various challenges in understanding Arabic texts. These difficulties can be caused by limited vocabulary, differences in language structure, and the lack of effective reading strategies. In addition, Arabic texts often have complex sentence structures and use language styles that are different from the learners' native languages. This condition makes the process of understanding reading materials more difficult, thus requiring an appropriate learning approach (Messouab, 2024).

In the context of foreign language learning, reading theory has an important role in helping learners understand texts better. Reading theory provides a foundation for how the process of understanding reading occurs, starting from word recognition to the interpretation of meaning as a whole. Through the application of appropriate reading theories, learners can develop effective reading strategies, such as predicting the content of the text, understanding the main ideas, and connecting information in the text with the knowledge they already have (Fadhli et al., 2024).

Although various reading theories have been widely developed in foreign language studies, their application in *maharah qira'ah* learning in Arabic still requires deeper study. Some studies focus more on language teaching methods in general, while studies that specifically discuss the application of reading

theories in understanding Arabic texts are still relatively limited. This shows the existence of a research gap that needs attention from researchers and practitioners of Arabic language education (Al-Jarf, 2026).

Based on this, a theoretical analysis of the application of reading theories in *maharah qira'ah* learning is needed. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how reading theories can be used to improve the ability to understand Arabic texts. In addition, this analysis can also serve as a basis for designing more effective learning strategies so that the process of learning to read Arabic can take place optimally and provide improved learning outcomes (Muzayanah et al., 2025).

II. METHOD

This study is a library research that aims to examine various theories and concepts related to Arabic reading comprehension. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe and explain systematically various concepts and findings contained in different literature sources. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the analysis of concepts, theories, and scholar's perspectives related to reading comprehension. Therefore, this study does not involve direct data collection in the field, but rather through the review of relevant written sources (Snyder, 2019).

The data sources in this study were obtained from various references such as books, scientific journal articles, and previous studies related to reading comprehension and the Arabic language. The data collection technique was carried out through the documentation method by collecting, reading, and recording important information from various literature sources relevant to the research topic. The collected data were then analyzed systematically to identify concepts and theories related to *maharah qira'ah* learning. The data analysis technique used was content analysis, namely analyzing the content of various literature sources to obtain a deeper understanding of the application of reading theories in Arabic language learning (Lubis et al., 2023).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Nature of Maharah Qira'ah

Maharah qira'ah is a fundamental skill in Arabic language learning that not only focuses on the ability to pronounce texts but also on comprehending meaning comprehensively. This skill includes the ability to recognize letters, vocabulary, sentence structures, and to interpret the content of reading materials critically. Therefore, reading serves as a primary means of acquiring knowledge, enriching vocabulary, and developing analytical thinking skills in Arabic (Rahman, 2018).

Functionally, *maharah qira'ah* learning aims to equip students with the ability to capture main ideas, important information, and messages in various types of texts, whether academic, scientific, or religious. This objective is not only technical but also cognitive, as it involves the processes of analysis, interpretation, and connecting information with prior knowledge. Therefore, reading comprehension should be directed toward deep comprehension, not merely the recognition of language symbols (W. Grabe, 2009).

In practice, reading in Arabic can be classified into two main forms, namely intensive reading and extensive reading (Muhammad Rizqi Ramadhan et al., 2024). Intensive reading emphasizes deep understanding of language structures and text meaning through guided analysis in the classroom, whereas extensive reading focuses on fluency, broadening knowledge, and increasing independent reading interest. These two types of reading complement each other in developing comprehensive reading competence (Al Haqiqy et al., 2024).

The process of *qira'ah* learning also takes place systematically through three main stages, namely pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. The pre-reading stage functions to activate prior knowledge and introduce the reading context, the during-reading stage focuses on understanding the content of the text with teacher guidance, while the post-reading stage is used to evaluate and reflect on students' comprehension. These three stages show that reading is an active process involving interaction between the text and the reader (Ardiansah et al., 2025).

Theoretically, reading comprehension can be explained through three main approaches, namely bottom-up, top-down, and the interactive model. The bottom-up approach emphasizes the importance of

mastering linguistic elements as the basis of comprehension, while the top-down approach highlights the role of background knowledge and context in understanding texts. Meanwhile, the interactive model integrates both approaches, so that reading is viewed as a dynamic activity involving both decoding and meaning interpretation. This interactive approach is considered more relevant because it is able to explain the complexity of the reading process comprehensively (Syaifudin, 2024).

Success in *maharah qira'ah* is also influenced by various factors, such as vocabulary mastery, background knowledge, linguistic ability, motivation, and reading strategies (Alderson, 2005). These factors interact with one another and determine the reader's level of comprehension of the text. Therefore, the development of reading skills must be carried out in an integrated manner by considering the cognitive, linguistic, and affective aspects of students (Hasan & Rido'i, 2024).

Thus, the essence of *maharah qira'ah* lies not only in the ability to read mechanically, but also in the ability to understand, analyze, and interpret texts critically and contextually. An integrative approach, systematic learning stages, and attention to supporting factors are the keys to optimizing Arabic reading comprehension effectively.

Implementation of Reading Theories in Maharah Qira'ah Learning

The application of the Bottom-Up approach in *maharah qira'ah* learning emphasizes the gradual process of language decoding, starting from the recognition of letters, vocabulary, and sentence structures before reaching complete comprehension of meaning. In practice, teachers can begin by training the pronunciation of Arabic letters, introducing new vocabulary, and explaining simple syntactic patterns that often appear in texts. For example, in the sentence *الْكِتَابُ جَمِيلٌ*, students not only understand the lexical meaning but also analyze the *mubtada'-khabar* (subject-predicate) relationship. This approach is particularly important in the context of Arabic because the complexity of morphology and the *i'rab* system requires accuracy in understanding linguistic elements (Kaufman, 1971). However, this approach tends to be mechanical if it is not balanced with contextual understanding, thus potentially resulting in rigid and less meaningful learning (W. P. Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

More deeply, the Bottom-Up theory has the advantage of building a strong linguistic foundation because students are trained to recognize language structures systematically. This makes it highly relevant for beginner learners who still have limited vocabulary mastery. In addition, the focus on the text helps minimize interpretation errors because comprehension is based on clear linguistic evidence (Ngabut, 2015). However, excessive dependence on this approach may hinder learner's ability to comprehend global meaning, especially when learners focus only on word-by-word analysis. In the context of Arabic language learning, this is often seen in difficulties in understanding long texts or unvowelized texts (*without harakat*), showing that this approach needs to be complemented by other more contextual strategies (W. P. Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

Meanwhile, the application of the Top-Down approach emphasizes text comprehension through the activation of background knowledge, experience, and the reader's context (Goodman, 1967). In *maharah qira'ah* learning, teachers can begin by providing stimulus in the form of guiding questions or preliminary discussions before reading the text. For example, before reading a text about prayer, students are invited to reflect on their experiences, so that when they encounter the sentence *الصَّلَاةُ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ*, they can understand its meaning more quickly and contextually (Wijaya & Hikmah, 2023). This approach shows that comprehension depends not only on the text but also on the reader's ability to connect new information with prior knowledge. However, in the context of Arabic, this approach has the potential to create misconceptions if background knowledge is not supported by adequate linguistic understanding.

The Top-Down theory has the advantage of improving global comprehension because readers can capture the main idea without having to understand all vocabulary. In addition, this approach is effective in activating schemata and training critical thinking skills through prediction and inference (Goodman, 1967). However, a high dependence on prediction can cause interpretation errors, especially when learners face texts with complex structures such as classical Arabic texts or religious texts. This shows that the Top-Down approach, although flexible, still has limitations if it is not balanced with adequate linguistic analysis (Stanovich, 1980).

Conceptually, these two approaches have complementary characteristics. Bottom-Up excels in linguistic accuracy, while Top-Down is more effective in building global meaning comprehension. The limitations of each approach show that using only one dominantly is not sufficient to produce optimal reading comprehension. In this context, experts recommend the interactive model as an integrative solution that can accommodate both processes simultaneously (W. P. Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

The interactive model, as proposed by David E. Rumelhart (1977), views reading as a process involving interaction between linguistic information and the reader's knowledge at the same time. In this model, the processes of decoding (bottom-up) and prediction (top-down) run in parallel to construct meaning. This approach is more realistic because it reflects the actual cognitive workings of readers, especially when dealing with complex texts such as Arabic. In addition, this model emphasizes that meaning does not only come from the text but is constructed through active interaction between the text and the reader (Rumelhart, 1977; Stanovich, 1980).

The integration of the interactive model becomes important because it is able to overcome the weaknesses of each approach. The bottom-up approach, which focuses too much on structure, can be complemented by the top-down approach that provides meaning context, resulting in more comprehensive understanding. However, the implementation of this model is not always easy, especially in the context of Arabic language learning where students' basic linguistic abilities are often still inadequate. This shows that the success of the interactive model greatly depends on students' readiness and teachers' pedagogical competence in managing learning strategies flexibly (W. Grabe, 2009).

In practice, the interactive model can be applied through integrated pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading stages. In the pre-reading stage, teachers activate schemata through discussion or prediction (top-down). In the during-reading stage, students conduct linguistic analysis of vocabulary and sentence structures (bottom-up) while still understanding the overall content of the text. Meanwhile, the post-reading stage is used for reflection and meaning interpretation. This approach allows the use of reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and inference in an integrated way, making learning more active and meaningful (Bin Sawad et al., 2022; W. Grabe, 2009).

Nevertheless, the integration of both approaches in the interactive model also has weaknesses, including requiring longer learning time and teacher readiness in managing various strategies simultaneously. In addition, this approach demands a balance between students' linguistic abilities and background knowledge, which in practice is not always evenly distributed. However, if applied properly, the interactive model remains the most effective approach because it is able to produce accurate and in-depth comprehension while also developing learners' critical thinking skills (W. P. Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Stanovich, 1980).

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that *maharah qira'ah* learning in Arabic for non-native speakers requires a comprehensive and holistic approach. The bottom-up, top-down, and interactive model approaches each have important contributions in the process of understanding texts. The bottom-up approach plays a role in building a linguistic foundation through the systematic recognition of letters, vocabulary, and language structures. Meanwhile, the top-down approach helps learners understand the global meaning of texts by utilizing background knowledge and context. However, the reliance on a single approach is not sufficient to produce optimal comprehension. Therefore, the interactive model emerges as an integrative solution that combines the strengths of both approaches simultaneously. This model allows the reading process to take place dynamically through the interaction between linguistic analysis and meaning construction. Furthermore, the integration of these three approaches becomes more effective when applied in systematic learning stages, namely pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. Thus, *maharah qira'ah* learning not only focuses on mechanical aspects but is also able to develop deeper, critical, and contextual understanding. The integration of these reading theories becomes a relevant and effective strategy in improving Arabic reading skills for non-native speakers.

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